Lead in the City of Benton Harbor Drinking Water

What you Need to Know to Protect Your Health

Lead is a metal found naturally in the environment. Lead can be found in paint, dust, soil, plumbing, household items, imported goods and materials used in jobs and hobbies. Almost everyone has been exposed to lead at some time in their life. Lead can be harmful to a person's health and it is best to avoid any exposure to lead. To learn more about lead exposure, visit Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe.

During recent testing, drinking water samples taken from more than 10 percent of the homes tested in your community exceeded the action level for lead (15 parts per billion). In response, the public water supply must take action to reduce the amount of lead in the water. Not all homes in your community were tested.

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) recommends that children under age 18 and pregnant women should consume only water that is run through a lead-reducing water filter. This recommendation is made because children and fetuses are most at risk of harm to their health from lead. Continue reading for more details.

MDHHS Lead Action Level Exceedance Recommendations

All households:

All households should flush their pipes. Follow your public water supply's instructions on how long to flush your pipes. MDHHS will be testing water from various homes to verify the flushing time is sufficient to reduce lead.

All households should clean their faucet aerators. Small pieces of lead can get trapped in the mesh screen (aerator) at the tip of the faucet. Cleaning the faucet aerator will remove any lead.

Continue reading on page 2 for more details on how and when to flush and clean your faucet aerator.

Everyone can use water that has not been filtered or flushed for:

- Showering or bathing (avoid swallowing the water)
- Washing hands, dishes, or clothes
- Cleaning

Households with a child under 18 or a pregnant woman are most at risk to lead exposure.

Use a filter certified to reduce lead in water. Children and fetuses are most at risk of harm to their health from lead.

Use ONLY cold filtered water for:

- Drinking and cooking
- Rinsing foods
- Mixing powdered infant formula
- Brushing teeth

Continue to use a certified filter until MDHHS says it's no longer needed. **You could also choose to use bottled water.**

State agencies are working to learn whether lead results from the homes tested on the public water supply reflect conditions that could be present elsewhere in the water system. More information will be provided as it becomes available and if the recommendations change.

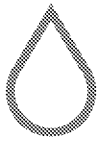
Things you can do to reduce lead in drinking water

Get your water moving. Flushing water pipes can reduce the amount of lead in your water. If you have not used your water for several hours, flush your pipes following your public water supply's recommended amount of time by doing any of the following:

- Running faucets
- Taking a shower
- Running a load of laundry
- Washing dishes

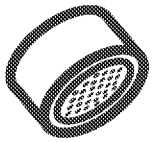
In addition, always run your water until it's cold before using it for drinking, cooking, rinsing foods or brushing your teeth. This flushes out any water that had been sitting in that sink's pipes and faucet.

After a water meter replacement, water main replacement or repairs to a leak in the water distribution system near your home, call your public water supply for whole house flushing directions. For more information, go to https://bit.ly/391ycD0.



Use a point-of-use (POU) water filter. A certified lead-reducing filter can reduce lead in drinking water. Filters are made to reduce lead, but do not guarantee that all lead will be removed from drinking water.

A POU water filter reduces contaminants at the point water is being used, such as a faucet. Look for these certifications on the filter package: NSF/ANSI Standard 53 for lead reduction and NSF/ANSI Standard 42 for particulate reduction (Class I). It is important to follow the manufacturer's directions. For more information on choosing a POU water filter, go to https://bit.ly/2vaHLkO.



Clean your faucet aerators. Clean the mesh screen, or aerator, on the end of your faucet at least every six months. If construction is being done to the water system or pipes near your home—including water meter replacement in your home—check and clean your drinking water faucet aerator every month until the work is done. Go to https://bit.ly/2JglQvE for more information.

Consider replacing older plumbing, pipes, and faucets that may add lead to water. Older faucets, fittings, and valves sold before 2014 may contain up to 8 percent lead, even if marked "lead-free." Look for replacement faucets made in 2014 or later and make sure they are NSF 61 certified or marked to contain 0.25 percent lead or less. Check your plumbing or hire a plumber to know what parts should be replaced to reduce lead in your drinking water.

Things you should not do to reduce lead exposure

Do not use hot water for drinking or cooking. Lead dissolves more easily into hot water.

Do not try to remove lead by boiling the water. Lead is not removed by boiling. Water evaporates during boiling, so the amount of lead in the water may end up higher than before boiling.

Testing water for lead

Testing your water with a certified lab is the only way to find out how much lead is in your drinking water. Your public water supply may offer to test your water for free. If not, you can test it yourself. Visit Michigan.gov/EGLElab and choose "Drinking Water Laboratory" to learn how to order a test kit. The cost is typically $30. If you have questions about testing your water, you can contact MDHHS at 844-934-1315.

For More Information

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services
Drinking Water Hotline
844-934-1315

Mi Lead Safe Website
Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe

Berrien County Health Department
269-926-7121
BCHDMI.org

City of Benton Harbor
269-927-8471
BHCity.us

Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy
800-662-9278

MDHHS Michigan Department of Health & Human Services

BERRIEN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
better health, stronger communities

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